

EDITORIAL: SPATIAL ACCESSIBILITY OF PEDIATRIC PRIMARY HEALTHCARE: MEASUREMENT AND INFERENCE

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Improving access to health care has long been at the forefront of policy debates in the U.S. There are multiple determinants of healthcare utilization: predisposing characteristics that explain individuals' propensities to use healthcare; enabling characteristics that describe the resources individuals have to use healthcare; and perceived or actual need for healthcare [Aday and Andersen (1974)]. Nobles, Serban and Swann (2014) illustrate the complexity involved with developing an understanding of one determinant of healthcare utilization. They examine spatial accessibility—an enabling characteristic under the aforementioned framework—to primary care pediatricians in Georgia. The authors encounter challenges that arise in many public policy applications, namely, the limitations of the available data, the need to conduct analyses that reflect system constraints, model selection and uncertainty quantification. The Area Editors featured this paper, along with contributions from three discussants, in an AoAS invited session at the 2014 Joint Statistical Meetings and are including the paper and those discussions in this issue because the paper showcases the type of research AoAS aims to publish: analyses requiring innovative statistical thinking to address questions of practical importance.

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